
COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Executive Order 7 (2006)

ESTABLISHING THE START STRONG COUNCIL

Importance of the Initiative

Early childhood education is critical to a child's success later in life. Early childhood education builds the foundation of a child's academic and economic success. Ninety percent of a child's brain growth is complete by age five. At present, too many children are unprepared by the time that they reach school. High quality preschool is vital to a child's success later in school and in life. There is a compelling educational and business case for high quality early education. It is critical that all of Virginia's children have the fundamental skills to read on grade level by the third grade and succeed in school.

Start Strong Council

By virtue of the authority vested in me by Article V of the Constitution of Virginia and Section 2.2-134 of the *Code of Virginia*, I hereby establish the Start Strong Council (the Council). The Council shall consist of 17 members to be appointed by the Governor. Such members shall include legislators, representatives from the public school system, private providers of early childhood education programs, elected local government officials, community business leaders, and parents. Additional members may be appointed at the Governor's discretion.

The Governor shall appoint the chairman of the Council, who shall be responsible for convening the council. The Council shall meet, at a minimum, quarterly to oversee the development of infrastructure for the Start Strong early childhood education programs

in the Commonwealth and to make such decisions as may be necessary to work to implement the program.

Members of the Council shall serve without compensation. They may receive reimbursement for expenses incurred in the discharge of their official duties.

The Council shall have the following powers and duties:

1. Develop statewide goals and best practices for expanding opportunities for 4 year olds to access quality pre-kindergarten programs, and encourage communities to identify local strengths and challenges in reaching the statewide goals.
2. Oversee the development and implementation of guidelines for local Start Strong programs including, but not limited to, transportation arrangements and eligibility criteria for participating students, qualifications for instructional personnel and administrators, inclusion of privately operated preschool programs, and policies for communication and cooperation with local Head Start and at-risk programs and local school boards.
3. Develop guidelines for the award of grants to local Start Strong councils.
4. Advise the Governor, the Secretary of Education, and the Secretary of Health and Human Resources on proposed policy and operational changes that facilitate interagency service development and implementation, communication and cooperation.
5. Identify and establish early childhood education goals for local Start Strong councils.
6. Recommend funding and strategies necessary to increase access to high quality preschool in the Commonwealth, in cooperation with local Start Strong councils.
7. Examine other issues as may seem appropriate.

Staff support shall be provided by the Office of the Governor, the Governor's cabinet secretaries, the Department of Education, and such other agencies as may be appropriate. An estimated 5,000 hours of staff time will be required to coordinate and support the work of the Council.

Effective Date of the Executive Order

This Executive Order shall become effective upon its signing and shall remain in full force and effect until January 16, 2007, unless amended or rescinded by further executive order.

Given under my hand and under the Seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia this 16th day of January 2006.

Timothy M. Kaine, Governor

Attest:

Secretary of the Commonwealth